

THE CALL OF TRUTH AND BEING:  
HUSSERL AND HEIDEGGER

I

THE contemporary Philosophy of Existence in all its branches is inspired by the thinking of Kierkegaard and Nietzsche. As has been shown in some of the preceding chapters, this does not mean that the problem of existence was not faced and subjected to philosophic analysis long before the advent of the nineteenth century. Heraclitus, Socrates, St. Augustine, and Pascal as well as many of the great Christian mystics were undoubtedly genuine existential thinkers. What is new in contemporary existentialism is the visualization of human existence within the general frame and the specific conditions of the present age.

In an almost completely secularized and disenchanted world the ancient questions concerning the nature of man and the meaning of life are being asked with a new urgency. The loss of God in the widely disseminated philosophies of atheism, materialism, and naturalistic "humanism" has thrust modern man into a situation of spiritual abandonment and homelessness in which everything, including his own existence, has become questionable. Thus the problem of "to be or not to be" is once more forced upon him as an alternative involving self-preservation or self-annihilation.

While the contemporary Philosophy of Existence presents in most of its discussions modern variations of the major themes of the existential thinking of the past, the orchestration of these themes as well as the technical nomenclature used in their elaboration stems to a large extent from the German philosopher Martin Heidegger. This in spite of the fact that Heidegger himself has repeatedly disavowed his association with "existentialism," insisting that his philosophy is primarily concerned with "being" rather than with "existence."

The existentialist themes, discussed by various authors in the

terminology coined by Heidegger, include, among others: the contingency, insecurity, self-estrangement, and dereliction of human existence (*Dasein*); its ultimate meaning; its "temporality," "historicity," and "authenticity"; its "care," its "dread," and its encounter with the abyss of "nothingness"; its "being-toward-death" (*Sein zum Tode*) and "freedom-toward-death"; the interrelation of "being" and "existence," "being" and "truth," "being" and "nothing," "being" and "transcendence." The connotations implied in these philosophical and anthropological concepts and the conclusions educed from them vary according to the theological and metaphysical convictions of individual authors, but the questions and problems to which they refer are essentially the same.

The method which is adopted by most of the contemporary existentialist thinkers for the analysis and elucidation of these basic problems is similarly uniform: it is the "phenomenological method" which was first developed by Edmund Husserl (1859-1938), the founder of the school of Phenomenology. A native of the Bohemian province of Moravia, Husserl began his academic career as a mathematician. Having turned to philosophy under the influence of the German philosopher Friedrich Paulsen, it became the great ambition of Husserl's life and work to transform philosophy into an exact and absolutely trustworthy science.<sup>1</sup> From 1916 until 1929 he held the chair of philosophy at the University of Freiburg in Baden. He died in exile in Paris, and his last work, the *Méditations Cartésiennes*, was written and published in the French language. In 1929, Martin Heidegger, Husserl's most promising and prominent pupil, became his successor in the University of Freiburg.

Husserl acknowledged his indebtedness to the *Wissenschaftslehre* of Bernhard Bolzano (1781-1848), and to the neo-Aristotelian "descriptive psychology" of Franz Brentano (1838-1917). Bolzano was a native of Bohemia and achieved international fame not only as a Catholic theologian but as an astute philosopher and mathematician. Brentano was a Catholic priest and at one time a distinguished member of the theological faculty in the University of Würzburg in Lower Franconia. He came, however, into conflict with the ecclesiastical authorities and was suspended from his priestly office and relieved of his academic duties. From 1874 to 1895 he was a lecturer at the University of

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. especially *Ideas: General Introduction to Pure Phenomenology* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1931).

Vienna, and the final years of his life were spent in retirement in Italy and Switzerland.

With his distinguished teachers Husserl shared the conviction that in the present age more than ever philosophy must be able to present a doctrine and a truth of universal validity. What kind of truth is it, he asked, which can claim to provide an unshakable foundation for a universal science? It must be a truth, he answered his own question, that is absolutely univocal and immutable in its universality. Husserl thus showed himself strictly opposed to any kind of relativism. There must be, he argued, an essence of truth as there is an essence of every other idea, and this essence is reflected in all particular truths. Without this essential principle of truth the existence of the world would be impossible. Though truth in its essence transcends every contingent existent, it is the "intentional object" of every true judgment of the human mind. This essence of truth, Husserl asserted, is revealed in a mental act of "intuition" (*Wesensschau*). His philosophic position thus entails a realism of essences, that is, a form of epistemological realism as extreme and radical as that of Plato and Descartes.

What is meant by Husserl's "intuition of essences" may be illustrated by referring to the artistic or poetic experience as distinguished from scientific knowledge. In the natural sciences an object is understood and explained in terms of its visible and tangible elements, qualities, and functions. An aesthetic apperception of the object, on the other hand, is, according to the testimony of both creative artists and aesthetic theorists, of a more immediate and, at the same time, a more fundamental and comprehensive nature. The French novelist Flaubert, for example, speaks in one of his letters of his "entering into the particular thing"—be it rock, plant, animal, or human being—that he depicts in his writings. An artist who is interested in the essential nature of the world of objects—a painter with the penetrating vision of a Michelangelo, a Greco, a Van Gogh—starts, to be sure, from sense perception, but he goes far beyond it in rendering the essences of things and beings. There are then, it would seem, aspects of reality which are hidden from sense perception and inaccessible to it, but open to a different kind of mental or intellectual apperception. This is obviously what both Plato and Husserl have in mind when they speak of the knowledge of "Ideas" or "Essences," respectively.

In both kinds of perception—sense knowledge and "eidetic" knowledge (or "ideation")—something "real" is directly given and perceived. Husserl therefore repeatedly emphasizes that there is nothing

"mystical" in such an "intuition of essences," even if the objects thus perceived are above and beyond sense perception. All "ideation," he insists, is rooted in sense objects and sense perceptions and can never dispense with them. The philosopher has to rely as much on the perceptive faculties of his senses as the painter has to rely on his optical vision, the composer on his sense of hearing, and the poet on both his eyes and his ears. What makes the artist is, however, not his faculties of visual, auditory, and tactual perception, but precisely his capacity to erect on the foundation of his sensory perceptions a new world and reality of higher validity and truth. And the reality and truth with which the philosopher is concerned are of a similar nature. Philosophy, according to Husserl, is thus not so much a science of facts as a science of essences (*Wesenswissenschaft*), and philosophic knowledge is not a knowledge of facts but a knowledge of essences.

Husserl calls the world of philosophic truths a world of *ideal phenomena*. They have, he says, no "real" existence in the sense in which existence is attributed to a rock or a tree or a dog, but neither do they have a purely "ideal" existence in the manner of Plato's "Ideas" or Kant's "things-in-themselves" (*noumena*). The Kantian *Ding an sich* remains unknowable: the human mind knows only its phenomenal manifestations as they "appear" in human consciousness. Husserl professes no interest in this central problem of the Kantian theory of knowledge. His own interest is centered in the elaboration of a science of the "pure phenomena" or "pure essences" of consciousness. Such "eidetic sciences" are, for example, pure geometry or pure arithmetic: they are sciences in which concepts are formed, judgments passed, and conclusions arrived at, independent of sense experience (*a priori*). Such purely mathematical concepts as number, triangle, and circle, Husserl calls pure essences, and he claims that such pure essences can also be encountered in a purified intellectual and philosophic intuition. He therefore proposes to analyze and describe such intellectual experiences in analogy with the mathematician's analysis and description of the objects and contents of physics. He thus develops his "phenomenological method" as an instrument to be used in the radical analysis of "pure consciousness."

The phenomenological method in its application to the analysis of the contents of human consciousness demands the simple and unprejudiced observation and description of those phenomena which are actually encountered either in sense perception or in "eidetic" perception. As his starting point Husserl chooses the point of view of every-

day life with its experience of a surrounding external world. In this familiar environment I perceive certain real and definite objects. But I may decide to shift my attention from such directly observed objects — this desk, this inkstand, this bookshelf — to any number of things which I know to be there, even if I do not observe them visually at the moment: the pictures on the wall behind my back, the lecture rooms and students in the building in which my office is located, the neighboring buildings, the gardens and playgrounds, and so on. All these things I know to be integral parts of my surrounding world, and the shifting of my attention to them makes them the more or less clearly co-perceived contents of my consciousness.

Into this natural experience of my everyday surroundings Husserl now proposes to introduce a radically different point of view. What would happen, he asks in effect, if I were to apply to these everyday experiences the principle of the Cartesian doubt? I might tell myself: it is possible that I am being deceived. I have the illusion that there is a desk with its utensils in front of me, and I merely imagine the existence of all those other things which, on the basis of previous observations, I had taken for granted. What, then, will remain if I call in question the existence of these supposedly "real" implements of my surrounding world? Nothing will remain but the experienced contents of my consciousness; for, no matter whether the objects of my experience are real or imagined, there can be no doubt that they are genuine experiences as contents of my consciousness.

And what has happened to the "real" world in the process of Husserl's "phenomenological reduction"? The external world of natural and normal everyday experience has simply been "disconnected," "bracketed," "put out of play," together with all my preconceived beliefs, opinions, prejudices, and convictions in regard to existing objects. There remains nothing but the sphere of "pure consciousness" with its indubitable contents. If rigorously applied, Husserl claims, this "phenomenological method" will ultimately answer the epistemological question, "How is it possible to gain access to transcendent reality?"

In all the transformations which a thing may undergo, there persists, according to Husserl, an identity and unity of certain essential features which remain unchanged. And phenomenological description is the description of these essential features. There are several degrees of evidence, and the final goal of phenomenological description is the attainment of an adequate evidence of the transcendent reality of

the phenomenon. As a "science of essences" phenomenology thus aims at the recognition of the essential predicables that belong to individual objects.

Attention has been called to the fact that Husserl acknowledged his indebtedness to the teachings of both Bolzano and Brentano. The question therefore suggests itself to what extent his Phenomenology shares in the philosophic heritage of the *philosophia perennis*, that is, that broad and vital stream of philosophic thought which reached its crest in the synthetic digest of Greek and Christian speculation embodied in the works of the leading mediaeval scholastics, especially those of the Thomistic school.<sup>2</sup>

Both Husserl and St. Thomas Aquinas teach that truth exists objectively, independent of the seeker and knower. They disagree, however, in their interpretation of the nature of Truth as such. For St. Thomas the object of the "first philosophy" (*prima philosophia*, i.e., metaphysics) is God. After having discussed the idea of God and the modes of His being and knowledge, he proceeds to a definition and description of the relationship which exists between the essence, existence, and knowledge of created beings and the essence, existence, and knowledge of God. In this connection St. Thomas also inquires into the capacity of human beings for knowing God, knowing themselves, and knowing other created beings. Each being, he asserts, has received the mode and essence of its existence from God and, correspondingly, also its specific measure and manner of striving, feeling, and knowing, its specific grade and type of truth and perfection.

As against this God-centered view of the world and of every created being in it, Husserl's Phenomenology presents a radical shift of accent and viewpoint. Taking its start from the human subject and his consciousness, Phenomenology remains ego-centered throughout; at no point does it achieve a genuine transcendence of the sphere of immanence. St. Thomas, on the other hand, knows of an order of intelligibility which not only transcends every created being but is prior to it, an order of which every created being partakes analogically. Intellectual knowledge, according to St. Thomas, is only possible in proportion to the range of intelligibility that is comprised in the object of knowledge. And while things and beings are thus known to some extent in their relation to the transcendent universal order

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<sup>2</sup> Cf. the author's *A Realistic Philosophy* (Milwaukee: The Bruce Publishing Company, 1944), pp. 18-21.

of intelligibility, the range and mode of such knowledge is strictly proportionate to the capacity of the human intellect.

"The human soul knows all things in the light of their eternal reasons," says St. Thomas.<sup>3</sup> He agrees with Husserl that the perceived objects or phenomena are the material cause of human knowledge, but he denies that they are its ultimate term. In St. Thomas' view this ultimate term and object of human knowledge is God and the Divine Intellect. The human intellect is described by him as "*capax Dei*," that is, as capable of being assimilated to some extent to the Divine Intellect in intellectual knowledge.

The potentialities of the human intellect with regard to the plenitude of the intelligible order may, however, never be fully realized in *statu viae* (i.e., in this earthly life), and for this reason every philosophy will ultimately remain fragmentary. St. Thomas points out that even material objects are known by man only imperfectly and not with the richness and fullness of perfectly comprehensive knowledge. And this more or less perfect knowledge comes to the human mind directly through created things but indirectly through the Divine Intellect, the infinite and eternal source, cause, and measure of all truth and all being. In the words of St. Augustine, "If we both recognize that truth is contained in what you say and in what I say: whence then comes our knowledge or vision of it? Neither do I see it in you, nor do you see it in me, but we both see it in that immutable Truth which is superior to our minds."<sup>4</sup> In short, the *philosophia perennis* holds that truth cannot be properly defined without referring it to God and the Divine Intellect. For if there were no absolute norm of things, prior to them and prior to finite minds, then every judgment regarding things would remain arbitrary, and any objectively certain articulation and evaluation of both essences and existences would become impossible.

Husserl, then, deviates from some of the basic tenets of the *philosophia perennis* when he assumes that the capacities of the human mind and the reaches of human knowledge are well-nigh unlimited. The fullness of truth exists, says St. Thomas with Husserl, but, he adds, only Divine knowledge and the Divine Mind can ever comprehend and comprise it in its plenitude. Husserl's ideal goal, in other words, is realized only in Divine knowledge where being and knowing are one, whereas for the finite mind they are distinct and apart.

<sup>3</sup> St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, Ia, qu. 84, a. 5.

<sup>4</sup> St. Augustine, *Confessions*, XII, 25.

Again, for St. Thomas all human knowledge is gained by way of the rational analytic and synthetic treatment of the data furnished by sense perception. Husserl, on the other hand, insists that philosophic evidence results from an "intuition of essences." The implied meaning seems to be, however, that the philosopher need not compare a number of objects before he proceeds to abstract from them their essential qualities, but that a single "intuitive" illumination reveals the essence in the individual object. Phenomenological "reduction" or abstraction means "looking away" ("bracketing") from all accidental qualities in order to concentrate on the essence of the object. St. Thomas, who assigns to the intellect the function of "*intus-legere*," that is, of reading and disclosing the essential natures ("*rationes*") of things, would in all probability have no quarrel with such an "intuition of essences." Husserl's conviction that this kind of "intuition" penetrates deeper into the world of existence than the traditional logical syllogism is shared by some leading Thomists.

Husserl and St. Thomas, furthermore, seem united in their opposition to any integral idealism and rationalism that regards the objects of knowledge as constructs or creations of the human mind and its innate categories. But whereas St. Thomas conceives of the analytical activity of reason as both active and passive, devoting considerable effort to the elucidation of the abstractive function of the "active intellect" (*intellectus agens*), Husserl asserts the primarily passive nature of rational intuitions.

Husserl claims for his "intuition of essences" the same kind and degree of "immediacy" or self-evident truth that St. Thomas restricts to "first principles."<sup>5</sup> Phenomenological intuitions, in other words, are regarded by Husserl as *a priori* truths and thus beyond the jurisdiction of experience. Only in two other instances (aside from "first principles") did St. Thomas admit such an immediate and *a priori* certitude of knowledge: one is the general knowledge of "the Good" (as distinguished from what is good in this or that particular instance or situation), which he describes as an *a priori* of practical reason; the other is the immediate experience and evidence which man has of his own existence. This latter is an *a priori* knowledge in the sense that it does not depend on any kind of demonstration.

It had been Husserl's original endeavor to break down Kant's dogma of the rational inaccessibility of "things-in-themselves." His

<sup>5</sup> Cf. the author's *A Realistic Philosophy*, p. 32 ff.

own realm of intuitively known essences was to replace Kant's *Ding an sich*. Husserl's philosophic interest, in other words, turned from the subject to that object which for Kant had remained an "*ignotum X*." In this original effort Husserl did, however, not persist: he never succeeded in actually reaching the sphere of transsubjective reality. St. Thomas succeeded where Husserl failed because he included in his approach to reality not only sense experience and intellectual experience but, in addition, the contents of revealed truth. While the focus of Husserl's Phenomenology is a purified transcendental consciousness, the focus of Thomistic philosophy is the creative and uncreated Being of God and His relationship to the various gradations of created being.

## II

It had been Husserl's original intention to turn from the subjectivism of Kantianism to the objects themselves and to free the realm of essences from its lifeless rigidity in order to reveal its interrelation with concrete historical existences. This objective, which Husserl himself later on relinquished in favor of a Cartesian immanence of consciousness, reappears in the speculation of Martin Heidegger. For him as for Husserl, philosophy is primarily a reading of phenomena, but beyond that it is for Heidegger "a universal ontology, starting out from a hermeneutics (i.e., an ontological analysis and interpretation) of man."<sup>6</sup> On the basis of sense experience and side by side with it, Husserl's philosophy aspired to a supra-empirical "intuition of essences" (*Wesensschau*). Heidegger applies Phenomenology and its methodological devices to a Philosophy of Existence which he wants to anchor, however, in a new "fundamental ontology." The central question, therefore, of Heidegger's philosophy concerns not "existence" but "Being." It reads: "What is Being and why is it?" or, in the phrasing which Leibniz had given to the same question, "Why is there something rather than nothing?"<sup>7</sup>

Martin Heidegger was born in 1889 in the little town of Messkirch in the German province of Baden, and he lives at present in seclusion at Todtnauberg in the Black Forest. "There on top of a mountain," writes Stefan Schimanski, "with the valley deep down below, with nothing but space and wilderness all around, in that small skiing hut, I spoke to the philosopher. . . . His living conditions were primitive; his books were few, and his only relationship to

<sup>6</sup> Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit* (1927); 6th edition (Tübingen: Neomarius Verlag, 1949), p. 37 f.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. Leibniz, *Principes de la nature et de la grâce fondées en raison*.

the world was a stack of writing paper. . . . The atmosphere of silence all around provided a faithful setting for Heidegger's philosophy. . . . The external world faithfully reflected the world of the mind . . . , the spirit of overwhelming solitude."<sup>8</sup>

Born and raised as a Roman Catholic, Heidegger shows himself well acquainted with the scholastic tradition in its Thomistic and Scotistic branches. His academic training proceeded at first under the influence of the Neo-Kantian school of Wilhelm Windelband and Heinrich Rickert and then brought him into contact with Husserl and his Phenomenology. He taught at the University of Marburg and, in 1929, succeeded Husserl at the University of Freiburg. In 1933, as rector of the latter institution, he delivered an address in which he expressed qualified approval of the National Socialist revolution. In 1935, he declined Adolf Hitler's invitation to accept the rectorate of the University of Berlin. After the defeat of Germany and the occupation of southern Baden by the French, Heidegger, for political reasons, was not permitted to resume his teaching.<sup>9</sup>

Heidegger's first published work was his inaugural dissertation (for the university lectureship), dealing with Duns Scotus' doctrine of Categories.<sup>10</sup> Part One of his masterpiece, *Sein und Zeit* (Being and Time), representing two of the originally planned six sections of the work, appeared in 1927. Part Two is still unpublished. The essays *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, *On the Essence of Cause* (or "Ground"), and *What is Metaphysics?*, were published in 1929. The first was a reinterpretation of Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*, the second (dedicated to Husserl on the occasion of his seventieth birthday) a discussion of the problem of "transcendence," and the third a new and critical approach to the problem of metaphysics.<sup>11</sup> Three

<sup>8</sup> Cf. *Existence and Being*, with an introduction by Werner Brock (Chicago: Henry Regnery Company, 1949), p. 10 f. This work represents the first English paraphrase, translation, and interpretation of some of Heidegger's major writings. Compiled by the co-operative effort of Werner Brock, Stefan Schimanski, Douglas Scott, R. F. C. Hull, and Alan Crick (all of England), it contains a summary account of *Sein und Zeit* and both outlines and translations of the essays *Hölderlin's Gedicht: Andenken* (1943), *Hölderlin und das Wesen der Dichtung* (1936), *Über das Wesen der Wahrheit* (1943), and *Was ist Metaphysik? Mit einem Nachwort* (1929, 1943).

<sup>9</sup> Officially Professor Emeritus, he has, in the meantime, been given a *Lehrauftrag*, i.e., he is conducting seminars and offering a few specified lecture courses.

<sup>10</sup> *Die Kategorien- und Bedeutungslehre des Duns Scotus* (1916).

<sup>11</sup> *Kant und das Problem der Metaphysik; Über das Wesen des Grundes; Was ist Metaphysik?* (1929); the latter was republished with a *Postscript* (1943).

studies dealing with the German poet Friedrich Hölderlin were published in 1936, 1941, and 1942.<sup>12</sup> Two additional works appeared in the postwar period: an analysis of *Plato's Doctrine of Truth*, with an appended *Letter on Humanism*, addressed to M. Jean Beaufret of Paris, and a volume entitled *Holzwege*, containing essays on Anaximander, Hegel, Nietzsche, Rainer Maria Rilke, and on several other subjects related to philosophy, art, and literature.<sup>13</sup>

Heidegger is "a peasant by birth and tradition," says Schimanski, and this is precisely the way the author of this book remembers his onetime teacher: stocky, sturdy, and stubborn, rooted in the maternal earth of his homeland, wrapped up in his search for truth and scarcely interested in enticing others to follow him on his lonely path. That Heidegger has found many such followers nevertheless and that the influence of his thought extends today far beyond the boundaries of Germany is not at all attributable to his own efforts; he has, on the contrary, done everything possible to render difficult the access to his philosophy. First of all, he has created a philosophic language and terminology all his own, frequently either reverting to the long-forgotten root meanings of words and concepts, or coining new ones to satisfy his groping quest for an adequate verbal expression of his ideas. He has, furthermore, abandoned time-honored ways of thinking to an extent that makes it almost impossible to fit his philosophic concepts into any established categories. It is thus hardly surprising, and at least partly his own fault, that he has been so often misunderstood and misinterpreted, especially by non-German thinkers who must of necessity find his modes of thinking puzzling and disconcerting. The fact, finally, that Heidegger's terminology and principal concepts have experienced an almost complete perversion of their original meaning at the hands of Jean-Paul Sartre (cf. Chapter Seven) has added to the confusion and has multiplied the difficulties of interpretation.

Heidegger's philosophy is usually associated with the contemporary movement of "existentialism," although the philosopher has himself repeatedly disavowed any such association. He has been accused of atheism, immoralism, antihumanism, and outright nihilism, notwithstanding the fact that Heidegger has at various times convincingly

<sup>12</sup> Hölderlin und das Wesen der Dichtung; Hölderlins Hymne: Wie wenn am Feiertag. . . ; Hölderlins Gedicht: Andenken.

<sup>13</sup> Platons Lehre von der Wahrheit. Mit einem Brief über den "Humanismus" (Bern: A. Francke, 1947). Holzwege (Frankfurt am Main: V. Klostermann, 1950).

refuted all these charges, most recently in his revealing *Letter on Humanism* (cf. p. 144 ff.). While the Belgian Thomist A. de Waeblens, in his comprehensive monograph,<sup>14</sup> concurs in the negative evaluation of Heidegger's philosophy, the Catholic philosopher Max Müller, who at present occupies Heidegger's former chair in the University of Freiburg, as well as the German Jesuit, Johannes B. Lotz, who at one time was one of Heidegger's pupils, suggest a much more positive approach and arrive at the conclusion that Heidegger's thinking is informed by deeply Christian impulses.<sup>15</sup> Friend and foe, however, are in agreement as to the highly original and provocative nature of the German thinker's basic ideas. It is also interesting to recall that at the Philosophic Congress held at the University of Cuyo in the city of Mendoza in Argentina in 1949, a large number of the papers presented dealt with the major problems thrust into the limelight by Heidegger's speculation, and that among those who followed Müller and Lotz in their constructive critical appraisal were several leading Spanish Thomists.<sup>16</sup>

"I am not primarily concerned with existence," Heidegger told Stefan Schimanski on the occasion of the latter's visit with the recluse of the Black Forest. "My book bears the title *Being and Time*, not 'Existence and Time.' For me the haunting question is and has been, not man's existence, but 'being-in-totality' and 'being as such.'" In other words, Heidegger is primarily interested in ontology, not in anthropology.

It is true nevertheless that the central concept in the published part of *Being and Time* is "existence," not "being," and it is this fact, among others, that has led to the adoption of the term "existentialism" to designate certain trends in contemporary philosophy that show the influence of Heidegger's major work. Why then Heidegger's protestation that he has no affiliation with "existentialism"? Because for him "existence" and "man in existence" or "existence in man" is merely a starting point and a means for the illumination of *Being as such*, that is, for the elaboration of a *universal and fundamental ontology*. Schimanski states quite correctly that Heidegger's philosophy begins where that of Sartre ends.

<sup>14</sup> Cf. A. de Waeblens, *La Philosophie de Martin Heidegger* (Louvain, 1942).

<sup>15</sup> Cf. Max Müller, *Existenzphilosophie im geistigen Leben der Gegenwart* (Heidelberg: F. H. Kerle, 1949); and Johannes B. Lotz, S.J., *Das christliche Menschenbild im Ringen der Zeit* (Heidelberg: F. H. Kerle, 1947).

<sup>16</sup> Cf. Oswaldo Robles, *En torno al primer Congreso Argentino de Filosofía* (Mexico: Ábside, XIII, 4, 1949), p. 435 ff.

It is Heidegger's contention that the inquiry into the meaning of "Being" was the central problem of occidental philosophy, from the Pre-Socratics down to Hegel, but that after Hegel the problem fell almost completely into oblivion. "Being" was, as it were, henceforth taken for granted; it was treated as if it were something self-evident, and it is being made use of in an extremely vague manner in all human knowledge, in all statements and judgments, in all human behavior. Kierkegaard profoundly speculated on the problem of human existence, but owing to the fact that his own thinking was negatively determined by Hegel's essentialism, the problem of "Being" and the interpenetration of existence and "Being" escaped him almost completely. He criticized Hegel for having omitted or suppressed the actual existence of the individual, and he offered his own "existentialism" as a means to aid himself and others in the practical ethical and religious conduct of life. True existential thinking, however, is, according to Heidegger, intimately related to both theoretical insight and practical conduct.

In his attempt to inquire anew into the meaning of "Being," Heidegger's first objective is the ontological analysis of human existence. What does it mean when I say: "I am?" Is the meaning the same as when I say: "a stone is," "a tree is," "a dog is"? And if the meaning is not the same, what is the difference? In short, what is the meaning of "is" in each of these statements? Heidegger answers that, while stones, plants, and brutes certainly exist, they lack the means to illuminate the meaning of their existence. Human life, however, differs ontologically from the life of all other existents in that it alone is and must of necessity be concerned about its Being and its potentialities. And human life alone is capable of piercing the mystery of its own existence. It alone makes genuine choices and decisions. It may gain full possession of itself and thus exist authentically, or it may lose itself and disintegrate into an unauthentic form of existence.

To carry on his ontological analysis Heidegger makes use of Husserl's "phenomenological method." To describe the way man exists, in contradistinction to other beings, he uses the term *Dasein* ("being-there"). Human *Dasein* "ex-sists" rather than "in-sists," that is, it does not "stand in itself" like things or plants or brutes, but it "stands out" comprehendingly into that boundless realm of "being" from which it receives its own meaning and which imparts to it the understanding of its own self as well as the understanding of the being of every other existent. In its "existentialistic" structure human *Dasein* thus differs ontologically from all other existents. While these

latter are either simply "*vorhanden*" (present, at hand) or "*zuhanden*" (at man's disposal, e.g., man-made tools, such as a saw or a hammer), man alone can learn to know by insight into his own existence the absolute ontological ground of everything that is and can thus prepare himself for the humble and obedient acceptance of the mandates of "Being."

Human *Dasein* is, furthermore, "being-in-the-world," and in this respect too man's mode of being differs essentially from the ways in which other existents (trees, stars, animals) are in the world. Man, as existing, is actively related to the objects and beings which surround him, and without his active insertion into the world, knowledge would be impossible. If man tries to withdraw himself from the world in detached observation, he perceives only the external aspects of things but fails to penetrate into their essential meaning. To seize reality, man must live and act. The external world, in turn, has no complete existential autonomy: it is rather a constitutive element of human *Dasein*, the subject matter and term of human action, a potential means for the realization of human existence. The world is the "space" which in the sum total of its implemēnts is related to man and the indispensable condition of his *Dasein*.

In his ontological analysis of the structure of human *Dasein*, Heidegger distinguishes several modes or "*existentialia*." The most important among these are "*Befindlichkeit*" (the way in which man is "placed" in life and in the world), "*Verstehen*" (the understanding of the dominant purpose or end for the sake of which man exists, and the understanding of the potentialities of his being), and "*Rede*" (the faculty of speech, including listening and silence).

In order to point out the difference between authentic and unauthentic existence, Heidegger proceeds from an analysis of the banality of everyday life ("*Alltäglichkeit*") and refers to a potentiality of human *Dasein* which he terms "*das Verfallen*" (the "falling away," disintegration). Who is this, he asks, who in "everydayness" exists in the world and with others? It is not the individual, private ego, he answers, with its genuine intentions, endeavors, and possibilities, but an anonymous and featureless public ego ("*das Man*"), the "one-like-many," shirking personal responsibility and taking its cues from the conventions of those who live *en masse*.

*Das Man* thinks, believes, speaks, behaves as "one does" and thus expresses the conformist leveling which characterizes the average human life. *Das Man* has fallen a prey to the things in the world

and has become alienated from authentic human purposes and possibilities. It expresses itself and communicates with others not in genuine speech (*Rede*) but in conventional, superficial chatter (*Gerede*). The atmosphere of publicity in which *das Man* moves begets either a satiety which rests on the pretense that everything is in the best of order and that the momentum of a stale inertia must under no circumstances be disturbed, or it generates a restless activity that leaps from distraction to distraction, in its craving for ever new surface impressions and sensations (*Neugier*), in its indifference to any essential insight and understanding. In either case the result is a "self-estrangement" (*Selbstentfremdung*) of human existence, leading eventually to the blotting out of its potentialities and to its disintegration in the irrelevancy of everyday life.

To exist authentically does not mean, however, that one has to disown or discard all the attitudes of everyday life. Such a demand would be impossible of fulfillment, since man exists and must continue to exist in the world and with others. Authentic existence is something decisively different from everyday life nevertheless, because it makes man capable of seeing his everyday life in an entirely new perspective. Heidegger follows at this point a line of thought which seems to have been suggested by Kierkegaard's category of "repetition": Kierkegaard's "knight of infinite resignation," having arrived at the highest religious level of existence, makes an act of absolute and unconditional renunciation, but he is rewarded in the end by receiving back in a richer and fuller measure everything he has surrendered. This is true as much of Abraham, the "knight of faith," as of Job, the "knight of infinite resignation." Having surrendered all things to God, their total detachment actually restores all things to them: they now really possess them rather than being possessed by them. With Kierkegaard or with St. John of the Cross this perfect sacrificial offering carries, of course, a strictly religious significance, but the religious undertones are still audible in Heidegger's philosophic argument.

Human *Dasein*, as has been stated, differs from other modes of existence in that it is always concerned about its Being and its possibilities. It is permeated and saturated by "care" (*Sorge*). As a preliminary for the analysis of "care" Heidegger first inquires into the ontological character of "dread" (*Angst*). And again Kierkegaard's "concept of dread" provides the psychological setting for Heidegger's ontological analysis.

## THE EXISTENTIALIST REVOLT

h Kierkegaard and Heidegger distinguish between "dread" and "fear": while the object of fear is always something definite of which man is afraid, the object of dread is "that indefinite something which is nothing" (i.e., no thing). What threatens is found nowhere in particular, and yet, it is everywhere. What is dreaded is the world as such and one's "being-in-the-world." The struggle with "dread" and its outcome ultimately determines whether man finds himself in the ground of "Being" or whether he is swallowed up and annihilated in "nothingness."

Man discovers and discloses the world in which he exists by way of those objects among which he moves, about which he is concerned and cares, and to which he attends. And to illustrate the all-pervasiveness of "care" in human *Dasein*, Heidegger alludes to an ancient Roman fable which also inspired some of the scenes in the second part of Goethe's *Faust*: "One day," the story reads, "when Care was crossing a river, she noticed some clay on the river bank. She took up a piece and began to fashion it. While she was still reflecting on what she had fashioned, Jupiter arrived on the scene. Care asked him to give this form of clay a soul, which Jupiter promptly did. But then a dispute arose between Care and Jupiter: each wanted to give his own name to the new creature. And while they were still arguing, Earth came along and insisted that her name be given to the creature, since it was she who had provided it with a body. The three of them thereupon called in Saturn to judge their dispute. 'Jupiter,' said Saturn, 'since you have given this thing a soul, you shall receive this creature after its death; you Earth, shall in the end receive its body; but since Care first shaped this creature, she shall possess it as long as it lives. And as for the quarrel over the creature's name—let it be called man (*homo*), since it has been fashioned out of earth (*humo*).'"<sup>17</sup> Human *Dasein*, says Heidegger, is "thrown" into a world not of its own making, and it is left there in its "thrownness" (*Geworfenheit*) to "care," to engage itself and concern itself, using its own devices and acting under its own responsibility.

### III

Section Two of *Being and Time* discusses the "temporality" (*Zeitlichkeit*) and "historicity" (*Geschichtlichkeit*) of human *Dasein*. From

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<sup>17</sup> Cf. William Barrett, *What is Existentialism?* (New York: Partisan Review Series, No. 2, 1947), p. 32.

its very beginning, Heidegger asserts, philosophic thought intimately linked the meaning of "Being" with the phenomenon of "Time". And the understanding of the "temporality" of *Dasein*, in its relations to the dimensions of past, present, and future, opens up the "horizon" for a new interpretation of "Being."

Heidegger begins this second major part of his investigation with two fundamental questions: (1) in what way can *Dasein* be approached and analyzed as a "whole" (*im Ganzen*), in its totality? And (2) in what way can *Dasein* be established as "authentic"? The first question is answered by the statement that to envisage *Dasein* as a whole it is necessary to understand it as "being-toward-death" (*Sein zum Tode*). For death, being the "end" of *Dasein*, completes and integrates it. Death — *my own death*, viewed as an ever present possibility — is part of the *Being* of *Dasein*. As soon as *Dasein* exists, it is "thrown" into this possibility, and this "being thrown" reveals itself in "dread."

According to an old proverb, "As soon as we are born, we are old enough to die." Death is thus an "end" of human *Dasein* in the sense that it may cut short my existence at any moment. In other words, my life is not a long, smooth, well-laid-out road, at the end of which the event of death occurs, but death permeates as it were my existence from the moment I am "thrown" into the world.

Among Christian thinkers no one has perhaps more profoundly experienced and expressed the "being-toward-death" of human *Dasein* than St. Augustine. "From the first moment that we find ourselves in a mortal body," writes the Bishop of Hippo, "something happens within us which steadily leads us toward death. . . . Each one of us is nearer death a year hence than he was a year ago, nearer tomorrow than he was today, nearer today than yesterday, nearer in a little while than he is now, nearer now than a short while ago. Each span of life shortens the length of life, and that which remains of it becomes smaller and smaller with every passing day; and thus our entire lifetime is nothing but a racing toward death, in the course of which no one is permitted to stop for a little while or to slow down his walk: all are forced to keep in step, all are driven on to the same speed."<sup>18</sup>

Since death not only completes *Dasein* but also terminates it, I can never have an adequate experience or understanding of the actual transition from life to death. I may have a more or less detached

<sup>18</sup> St. Augustine, *De civitate Dei*, XIII, 10.

and somewhat abstract experience of the death of others, but such an experience—no matter how much I may be stricken by the death of a beloved person—is of no relevance for the understanding of my own death. I can only learn to understand that I have to die my own death and that no one can relieve me of this my personal and private destiny. Kierkegaard's reflections on death, especially those attributed to Johannes Climacus in the *Unscientific Postscript* (cf. p. 47), have undoubtedly lent their persuasiveness to Heidegger's argument.

To envisage death as a genuine potentiality of the Being of *Dasein*, it is necessary to consider the way death appears in the context of everyday existence. In the no man's land of the anonymous *Man* the stark reality of death is obscured or neutralized. One reads about deaths in the obituary columns of the daily newspapers, one attends public funerals, one observes certain rules and conventions laid down by *das Man*, and one tries at the same time every possible trick to reduce the actuality of one's own death to some such abstract and detached proposition as "all men are mortal." The result is the self-estrangement of *Dasein* from its genuine potentiality of Being. The authentic understanding of my own "being-toward-death," on the other hand, restores to me my true selfhood; it personalizes me, and it also imparts to me true insight into the Being of my fellowmen. In virtue of the "resoluteness" (*Entschlossenheit*) with which I face my own death I am freed from the bondage of those inconsequential concerns and activities which engulf the everyday existence of *das Man*. By overcoming in my "freedom-toward-death" the self-delusions of *das Man*, I can at last arrive at an understanding of my *Dasein* as a "whole."

Heidegger's second question, referring to the problem of the "authenticity" of *Dasein*, calls for an ontological analysis of the three phenomena of "conscience," "guilt," and "resolve." The "call" of conscience appeals to the selfhood of man; it calls him back from the anonymity of *das Man*. This call itself issues from the innermost self of man and is generated by "care." "Conscience reveals itself as the call of Care," says Heidegger. "Guilt" points to an intrinsic and original deficiency or privation of *Dasein*. Only by entering into the prospect of guilt can man open himself to his authentic potentiality of existence. And he projects himself into this potentiality by his "resolve," thus imparting to his *Dasein* an authentic lucidity. "Resolve" makes possi-

ble genuine "choice"; it begets action in concrete situations and the strength to master them.

Resolute, authentic *Dasein* lives in the fulfilled moment and has become capable of relating itself to future, past, and present, the three dimensions of "temporality." They unveil temporality as a "being-outside-itself" (an *ex-statikōn*) and are therefore called by Heidegger the three "ex-stases."

The authentic understanding of "Being" is grounded, according to Heidegger, in "historicity" and is transmitted in the history of civilization. "Historicity" designates the specific kind of motion or movement that occurs in human history, in contradistinction to any kind of physical and mechanical motion. History, the recorded annals of the "happenings" (*das Geschehen*) of human *Dasein*, places man within the monumental frame of the social and national community. The true historian is capable of disclosing the history of the past in its potentialities with such forcefulness that its implications for the present and the future become evident. He is, in the words of the German romanticist Friedrich Schlegel, "a retrospective prophet." In his discussion of these problems of historiography Heidegger specifically refers to Nietzsche's essay *On the Use and Abuse of History* (cf. p. 76 ff) and states that the authentic historian should be able to present a synthetic unity of "monumental," "antiquarian," and "critical" historiography.

#### IV

The analyses of Part One of *Being and Time* were to unfold "the transcendental horizon" of the problem of Being. Part Two was to present a critical inquiry into the central doctrines of Aristotle, Descartes, and Kant, and to point the way for contemporary philosophy to overcome the subjectivism of modern thinking. The several essays which Heidegger published since the appearance of the first part of his major work in 1927, are all organically related to these fundamental themes of *Being and Time*. There is, however, an unmistakable shift of emphasis from existence to "Being," and Heidegger, furthermore, shows increasing interest in the interrelation of philosophy and poetry. In the essay *On the Essence of Truth* he describes the philosopher as "a wanderer into the neighborhood of Being."

The interrelation of philosophy and literature, Heidegger declares, was closest in ancient Greece, especially in the age of the Pre-Socratics.

Man was then the "guardian" of Being and dwelled in its intimate proximity. And this closeness to "Being" is the distinguishing mark of the true philosopher and the true poet in every age. Their creative thinking has its source in the "ground of the Truth of Being."

The problem of Truth as such, Heidegger states, is inseparably linked with the problem of Being. But the original meaning of Truth has become obscured in the course of the history of philosophy. The Greek term *ἀ-λήθεια* describes truth as an "un-covering" or "un-veiling" (*Entbergung*) as opposed to the "concealment" (*Verbergung*) of untruth. Truth as such, according to Heidegger, is essentially one and indivisible. He subsequently criticizes and tries to refute as incomplete and inconclusive the scholastic saying, *veritas est adaequatio rei et intellectus* (truth expresses an adequate assimilation of the intellect and the thing), a criticism which seems to indicate that Heidegger misunderstands the implications of this time-honored definition. For, as Etienne Gilson points out, to understand this scholastic sentence correctly, it is necessary to call attention to the meaning it has "in the existential ontology of St. Thomas Aquinas. . . . The assimilation of the intellect to reality which defines truth, is legitimately affirmed in a doctrine in which the intellect, in the process of reflecting on itself, finds itself capable of becoming reality. . . ." <sup>19</sup>

When Heidegger speaks of the "overtness" (*das Offene*) in which the vast realm of beings is "opened up," he evidently (yet unwittingly) repeats in modern phraseology Aristotle's and St. Thomas's "*anima est quodammodo omnia*" (the human soul is in a way all things).<sup>20</sup> The knowing intellect receives into itself the "form" of the thing known and in some way "becomes" that thing by a process resulting in a mysterious synthesis of the knower and the object known. All knowledge, in other words, leads to an expansion or enlargement of the being of the knowing subject.

According to Thomistic doctrine, all things are knowable only, however, because they are ontological manifestations of the supreme knowledge of God: *Scientia Dei est causa rerum* (God's knowledge is the cause of all things). In short, without the Eternal Ideas of

<sup>19</sup> "L'adéquation de l'intellect au réel, qui définit la vérité s'affirme légitimement dans une doctrine où, réfléchissant sur soi-même, l'intellect se découvre capable de devenir la réalité: *secundum hoc cognoscit veritatem intellectus, quod supra se reflectitur.*" Etienne Gilson, *Le Thomisme* (Paris: Vrin, 1948), pp. 326 and 331.

<sup>20</sup> St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, Ia, qu. 14, a. 1.

the Divine Intellect there would not only be no knowable objects, but no objects at all. Both the knowing subject and the known object participate in the plenitude of the Divine Being.<sup>21</sup> And St. Thomas would certainly agree with Heidegger that only in this kind of "overt-ness" an adequation of a thing and an intellectual proposition has meaning and becomes possible. This "overt-ness" is the enduring and indispensable condition not only of all propositional truth, but of all human civilization, all human knowledge, and all purposive action.

The problem of Truth in all its magnitude was, according to Heidegger, faced for the first time when some of the early Greek thinkers in profound astonishment asked the question, "What is all that which is?" This question marked not only the beginning of the history of philosophy and metaphysics but also of history and civilization. To ask such a question the thinker had first to withdraw from the everyday view of things, in a way analogous to the withdrawal described by Plato in the famous parable of the "cave."<sup>22</sup> Liberated from the fetters of *das Man*, the philosopher ascends into the light of the "sun" of Truth. When he finally descends again "into the cave," he is able to convey to his fellowmen the insight he has gained.

Truth thus consists in the "uncovering," in the bringing back into "the open" that which is. Man, in the process of this "uncovering" of the being of things, enters into *Dasein*. The early Greek thinkers revealed for the first time what it means to be or to exist "in truth." And while this insight into the Truth of Being liberates man for authentic existence, the previous "concealment" of the Truth of Being had held man imprisoned in untruth and error. True philosophy, Heidegger concludes, is always obedient to and a servant of "Being."

## V

Heidegger's Hölderlin essays<sup>23</sup> are reflections and meditations on philosophy and poetry and their interrelation. Hölderlin, who gave

<sup>21</sup> Cf. the author's *A Realistic Philosophy*, p. 93 f.

<sup>22</sup> Cf. Plato, *Politeia* (*The Republic*), VII, 514a, 2 to 517a, 7.

<sup>23</sup> Friedrich Hölderlin (1770-1843) was a German poet affiliated with both the classical and romantic periods of German letters. A native of the province of Swabia, he studied Protestant theology at the University of Tübingen and in his youth associated with Schiller, Schelling, and Hegel, although as a poet and thinker he stands all by himself. Like the hero of his novel *Hyperion* he lived as a "hermit" in the midst of a society which could offer no satisfactory answer to his longing for a unified *Weltanschauung*. In tragic isolation he sought in vain to bridge the chasm between

such profound expression to his insight into the metaphysical nature of poetry, is for this reason for Heidegger "the poet of the poet." In Heidegger's view, Hölderlin felt himself to be an intermediary between "the gods" and the people, trying to communicate to men what he had learned of "the gods," and to "name the holy." The age in which Hölderlin lived and wrote is, with only minor modifications, also the age and cultural environment of Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, and Heidegger: an age in which "the old gods" have sunk into oblivion and "the new God" has not yet appeared. God "withholds His presence," and "holy names are lacking."

In the modern age "the God remains afar," no matter how hard man labors to fill the void by the invention of substitute "gods." In such an age the one necessary thing is, according to Heidegger, to persevere and to be ready for the time when the word that could reverently and convincingly "name" the High One will be granted again. The Hölderlin essays, says Heidegger, "make no claim to be contributions to research in the history of literature and aesthetics. They arose from a necessity of thought."

Poetry is for Heidegger what it was for Hölderlin: not an embellishment of human existence and not a mere phenomenon of culture but rather the deepest "ground of human history," guiding and inspiring human beings by the verbal expression of its insights and visions. God is, whether man knows Him or not. What singles the poet out among mortals is the fact that he is "open" for the reality of the divine and, while singing its praises, rises into its closest proximity. The poet's joyfulness is born of his nearness to the holy, but the loneliness of his worship and his remoteness from his fellow men, whom he yet deeply loves, makes his poetry replete with overtones of sorrow and sadness.

## VI

The most important of Heidegger's essays, aside from the *Letter on Humanism*, is the lecture on the nature of *Metaphysics* (1929)

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subjective experience and objective reality; in vain he tried to find refuge and consolation in nature, in art, and in love, the three symbols and sublimations of his frustrated quest of the divine. In the idealized forms and figures of ancient Greece he visualized that serene harmony which was denied to him and his age. An unhappy love affair left his mind clouded with an incurable melancholy, and from a brief sojourn in France and Spain he returned as an aimless wanderer, spending the remaining thirty-seven years of his life in mental derangement. In the dynamically moving force of his Greek meters and free rhythms he resuscitated the religious individualism of Pindar's odes and anticipated the hymnic language of Friedrich Nietzsche.

with its *Postscript* (1943). Here the philosopher analyzes the concept of "nothingness," viewed as a metaphysical category and in its relation to the problem of "Being." To pose the problem of "Being," Heidegger contends, one must first have faced the problem of "nothingness." The discussion of "nothingness" is thus intended as a preliminary step leading to the elucidation of metaphysics.

The one specific mood in which "nothingness" is experienced is "dread." "What effect has — nothing?" Kierkegaard had asked. "It evokes dread." For Heidegger "nothingness" is a strange and bewildering metaphysical phenomenon. Though it cannot be actually apprehended, it is much more than a mere vague feeling or emotion. In this frightening experience all things seem to slide away from the grip of man: the "nothing" seems to annihilate them (*"das Nichts nichtet"*). But this sinking away of things may and should be followed by a second and reverse movement: man's rediscovery of the true nature of things and his subsequent turning back to them with his newly gained love and understanding. Once he has been threatened and stirred to his depths by the engulfing terror of nothingness, he now is prepared for a new and radically different approach to reality. Things, after having been tested in the contrast to nothingness, are revealed in the total "otherness" of their true being.

Metaphysics is defined by Heidegger as the "questioning beyond" the things that are, in order to regain them in their full reality and totality. The traditional technical term for such a "questioning beyond" is, of course, "transcendence." Without transcendence, that is, without the metaphysical inquiry, knowledge and learning become a mere statistic and positivistic accumulation and classification of data.

Metaphysical inquiry, Heidegger says, began with the question, "What is the Being of all that is?" This query brought man into "the open": his horizon widened immeasurably, and both history and civilization received a solid foundation. And this momentous process has to be repeated by every genuine thinker in every historic epoch.

In the *Postscript* to the lecture on metaphysics Heidegger dwells in particular on the distinction between *science* and *philosophy*, contrasting scientific "calculation" (which he calls "the will to will" or "the will to power") and philosophico-metaphysical thought. In metaphysical speculation the phenomena and problems which the philosopher proposes to analyze and interpret can never be made "objects" in the sense in which one speaks of the objects of scientific research. The reason is that in the approach to metaphysical data the Being

of the thinker is always involved and implied. He can neither step outside his own Being nor outside "Being" itself and thus achieve a scientific "objectivity." "All the historical and philosophical disciplines (*Geisteswissenschaften*)," writes Heidegger, "and even those which deal with organic life, must, in order to be strict, of necessity be inexact."<sup>24</sup>

Heidegger concludes his inquiry into the nature of metaphysics by describing the true philosopher as the one who obediently and faithfully responds to the "call of Being," the one who dedicates his life to the maintenance of the Truth of Being. Only this attitude on the part of the philosopher can succeed in kindling an identical single-minded devotion in others. The true philosopher and the true poet strive to find the word which enunciates the Truth of Being. And "dread," opening up for man the abyss of "nothingness," may then cause him to listen to this Word in speechless silence. For "nothingness is the veil of Being."

## VII

The *Letter on Humanism* was written by Heidegger in answer to certain pertinent questions which M. Jean Beaufret, of Paris, had asked in a communication of November 10, 1946. It clarifies some of the terms and concepts which Heidegger uses in his various writings and attempts to refute some of the objections and accusations of the philosopher's critics.

At the outset Heidegger once more insists on the essential difference between the scientific and philosophical approach to reality. Modern philosophy, he argues, is haunted by the fear of losing its dignity and validity unless it can make itself into a "science." But such a transformation would entail the surrender of the very essence of thinking. Is it fair, Heidegger asks, to call "irrationalism" the endeavor to bring thought back into its own element?

In reply to M. Beaufret's question, "*How can we restore the true meaning of 'Humanism'?*" Heidegger points out that true humanism (and he obviously regards his own philosophy as an endeavor aiming at the restoration of true humanism) is concerned with the essence or nature of man, so that the *homo* may again become *humanus*. Humanistic thinking should thus be engaged in the task of leading

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<sup>24</sup> Heidegger, *Die Zeit des Weltbildes*. In *Holzwege* (Frankfurt am Main: V. Klostermann, 1950), p. 73.

man back from the inhuman and antihuman to the human and therewith to the original sphere of his own being.

The *humanitas* of man rests then on his very nature. But how is human nature properly defined? Karl Marx believed he had discovered human nature in the "social man." For him the totality of man's natural needs and wants (food, clothing, procreation, economic subsistence) is secured and safeguarded in and by Society. The Christian, on the other hand, defines man's *humanitas* by setting it off from *Deitas* (the Godhead). In the Christian economy of salvation man is "the child of God," listening to the call of the Father in the incarnate God-Man, and following this call. Man, in the Christian view, is "not of this world," inasmuch as "this world" is merely a transitory passage to the plenitude of supernatural life.

If "humanism" is defined as the endeavor to enable man to recover in freedom his *humanitas* or his human dignity, then there are as many different kinds of "humanism" as there are different concepts of the "freedom" and the "nature" of man. Their common denominator is the conviction that the *humanitas* of the *homo humanus* is determined by a definite interpretation of human nature, of history, of the world, of reality as a whole. Every such "humanism" is grounded in metaphysics, that is, it presupposes a knowledge of the most general nature or essence of man. But, Heidegger asserts, the question as to the Truth of Being and the question as to the way in which man is related to the Truth of Being are inaccessible to metaphysics.

Perhaps even more important, however, is the question whether or not the nature of man is situated in the same dimension as the animal nature. In other words, does our questioning proceed in the right direction when it tries to understand and define human nature by referring it back to the nature of plants and animals, simply adding something specifically "human"? Is the definition of man as "rational animal" a really satisfactory and exhaustive description? To be sure, such a definition will always make it possible to arrive at correct predications concerning man, but it would seem that within such a frame of reference man remains cast in the molds of the natures of plants and brutes, notwithstanding the fact that he is said to be marked off from them by a specific difference. Heidegger is convinced that this traditional definition implies an underestimation of human nature. Traditional metaphysics, he claims, always thinks of man in terms of *homo animalis* rather than specifically in terms of man's *humanitas*.

According to Heidegger, the aberrations of naturalism and biolog-

ism are not overcome by merely grafting on the physical and physiological nature of man an immortal soul, and on the soul a spiritual, personal existence. The fact that physiology and chemistry can investigate man scientifically as a natural organism does not prove that human nature is constituted or even conditioned by this scientifically analyzed body.

None of the "humanistic" definitions of man, Heidegger asserts, does justice to his true dignity. And he admits that to the extent that the analyses contained in *Being and Time* call attention to these shortcomings of "humanism," the philosophic position advanced there may well be called "antihumanistic." This, however, does not mean that it is antihuman. On the contrary, Heidegger's position is antihumanistic precisely because "humanism" in the accepted usage of the term does not esteem highly enough the *humanitas* of man.

As had been stated in *Being and Time*, man is "thrown" into the Truth of Being, so that in the ex-sistence of his *Dasein* he should be the guardian of Being and that in the Light of Being the things that are might appear in their true nature. Whether and how God, history, and nature enter into the Light of Being—this matter is not for man to decide: he is simply called to be in all humility the "shepherd of Being."

But what is "Being" (*das Sein*)? It is neither God nor the ground or cause of the world (*Weltgrund*), Heidegger answers. It is vaster and broader than everything that is (*das Seiende*), but it is nevertheless closer to man than any existent, be it rock, animal, a work of art, an angel, or even God Himself. "Being" is nearest to man, but this nearest has become his farthest because he has lost his relationship to Being in its plenitude and is clinging to things and beings rather than to "Being." And this loss of his relationship to Being in its plenitude is the real reason why modern man—rootless and homeless—moves in the *void of nothingness*. When man forgets the Truth of Being in the midst of the noisy crowd of existents, his *Dasein* disintegrates.

Parmenides' ancient saying, ἔστιν γὰρ εἶναι ("Being certainly is"), implies that existents never really and fully "are." Philosophy has never advanced beyond this insight, says Heidegger. The latest thinker who deeply experienced the homelessness of modern man—his separation from "Being"—was Friedrich Nietzsche. But his way out of this modern dilemma was the abortive attempt to put metaphysics upside down. And yet, in the nearness of Being alone the question can and

must be asked and decided whether night and darkness shall remain or whether the day of holiness will dawn again and the divine epiphany will once again become possible. "Or how shall modern man be able even to ask in earnest whether God is near or withholds Himself if he refuses to think in that dimension in which alone such a question can be asked? . . . This dimension, however, is the dimension of the holy. . . . Perhaps what makes this present age different from other epochs is the fact that the dimension of the holy is closed to it. And perhaps this is the very thing which makes this age not only unholy, but un-whole and un-hale (*heillos*)."<sup>25</sup>

It seems to Heidegger that any true "humanism" understands the *humanitas* of man from his nearness to Being, from his "ex-static" dwelling in the neighborhood of Being, and from his "care" for and about Being. The real meaning of "humanism" can thus only be restored by a redefinition of the term, and such a redefinition requires first of all a more genuine understanding of man's nature and *Dasein*. But then the question may be asked whether a humanism which sets itself up against all the historical forms of "humanism" can still legitimately be called by the same name?

This question provides Heidegger with an opportunity to answer those critics who have accused him not only of teaching an antihumanistic but an antihuman philosophy and who for good measure have added to their indictments the charges of irrationalism, atheism, and nihilism.

"Because," says Heidegger, "we have spoken out against 'humanism,' they fear that we defend the in-human and glorify barbaric brutality. For what is more 'logical' than the assumption that for him who opposes 'humanism' there remains only the affirmation of inhumanity?"

"Because we have spoken out against 'logic,' they conclude that we demand that the rigor of thinking be abandoned and that in its place the irrational arbitrariness of blind urges and emotions be enthroned. For what is more 'logical' than to assume that he who speaks out against 'logic' defends the a-logical and anti-logical?"

"Because we have spoken out against 'values,' they profess their horror in view of a philosophy which presumably exposes to contempt the highest goods of humanity. For what is more 'logical' than to assume that a thinking which denies 'values' must of necessity proclaim the worthlessness of everything?"

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<sup>25</sup> Heidegger, *ibid.*, p. 103.

"Because we have stated that the Being of man is a 'being-in-the-world,' they believe they have discovered that we have degraded man to a mere this-worldly creature and have thereby plunged headlong into the philosophy of Positivism. For what is more 'logical' than to conclude that whoever asserts the 'worldliness' of man leaves room only for the 'this-worldly' and denies the 'other-worldly' and with it any kind of transcendence?

"Because we have called attention to Nietzsche's saying that 'God is dead,' they declare that we teach atheism. For what is more 'logical' than to assume that he who has experienced the 'death of God' (in the present age) is a thoroughly god-less individual?

"Because in all these matters we have spoken out against that which mankind regards as sacrosanct, we are accused of teaching an irresponsible and destructive 'nihilism.' For what is more 'logical' than to assume that he who denies the truth of existing things and beings, places himself on the side of non-being and preaches 'nothingness' as the sole meaning of reality?

"What is going on here? . . . With the aid of the much heralded logic and *ratio* they argue that what is not positive must of necessity be negative. . . . And they are so filled to the brim with 'logic' that everything that runs counter to the customary drowsiness of thinking must be branded as a damnable negation. . . . But does the '*contra*' which is advanced against certain conventional opinions necessarily mean pure negation? . . .

"To advance arguments against traditional logic . . . simply means to pay attention to that 'Logos' which manifested itself early in the history of human thought. . . . What good are all the 'systems' of logic as long as they remain . . . neglectful of the task of inquiring into the nature of the 'Logos'?

"Our argumentation against 'values' does not want to assert that all those things which are commonly designated as 'values,' such as culture, art, science, human dignity, the world, God, and so on, are worthless. It should rather be seen and understood at long last that we deprive things and beings of their dignity by designating them as 'values.' By estimating something as a 'value,' this valued thing or being is reduced to a mere object of human evaluation. That which amounts to something in its own Being is . . . more than a mere 'object of value' for a subject. Every valuation, whether positive or negative, is a subjectivation. . . . Calling God the 'supreme value' means to degrade the nature of God. Thinking of God in terms of

'value' is the greatest blasphemy imaginable. . . . To argue against 'values' . . . means therefore to protest against subjectivism and to confront thought with the light of the Truth of Being. . . .

"The statement: the essence of man rests on his 'being-in-the-world,' implies no decision as to whether man is a this-worldly or other-worldly being in any theologico-metaphysical sense. In this definition of the nature and condition of man nothing is said as yet concerning the existence or non-existence of God. . . . But with the clarification of the meaning of 'transcendence'<sup>26</sup> a sufficiently clear concept of *Dasein* is gained to make it possible to ask how human *Dasein* is ontologically related to the existence of God. . . ."<sup>27</sup>

To think the Truth of Being, Heidegger concludes his inquiry into the meaning of "humanism," is to think the *humanitas* of the *homo humanus*. If, however, man's *humanitas* is thus centrally located in philosophy, will it not become necessary to supplement the knowledge of Being (ontology) with general and specific directions for doing (ethics)? There is no doubt that in this age of technology man, who has been handed over to the impersonal forces of the featureless collective, can be brought back to a personal steadiness of his badly shaken existence only by a moral ordering of his planning and doing.

"Man, in so far as he is man, abides in the neighborhood of God" (*ἦθος ἀνθρώπου δαίμων*). Thus reads Heidegger's translation of an ancient saying of Heraclitus. And to give the meaning of these words added emphasis, he tells an anecdote related by Aristotle: "We are told of some words that Heraclitus is said to have spoken to a group of strangers who had come to see him. Drawing nearer, they observed Heraclitus as he was warming himself at a bake-oven. They stopped in surprise and, as he noticed their hesitation, he encouraged them to come in, saying: 'Here, too, the gods are present.'"<sup>28</sup>

The strange visitors, so Heidegger interprets this anecdote, are somewhat taken aback at the sight of the great thinker. They had expected to meet him in surroundings bearing the marks of the extraordinary. And their curiosity had hoped to make this meeting an occasion for some entertaining chatter. Perhaps they had expected to find the philosopher wrapped up in deep thought. And what do they find? A homely, commonplace locale; an oven in which bread

<sup>26</sup> Cf. Heidegger, *Vom Wesen des Grundes*, p. 28, n. 1.

<sup>27</sup> Heidegger, *Über den "Humanismus," loc. cit.*, pp. 95-101.

<sup>28</sup> Cf. Aristotle, *De partibus animalium*, A 5, 645, a 17.

is being baked; and a plain, ordinary individual — a philosopher who warms himself at the stove! As there is nothing sensational about the sight of a shivering thinker, the curious visitors lose all desire to step nearer. Do they have to pay a visit to a great philosopher to be treated to such an uncouth spectacle? Heraclitus, who reads the disappointment in their faces, tries to speak words of encouragement. He asks them to enter, and he adds, "Here, too, the gods are present."

Not unlike those men who paid a visit to Heraclitus, Heidegger means to say, we are used to looking for philosophic thought in the form of the extraordinary, accessible only to the initiated. And we are used to measuring moral action by successful practical accomplishments. What is the real measure of thought? And to what law or norm does the action which it begets conform?

Thinking itself is an action, replies Heidegger; an activity more potent and more pregnant with consequences than any kind of *praxis*. Thinking permeates all doing and making. Thinking aids "in the building of the House of Being," and the nature of Being will some day make it possible for us to meditate on the meaning of "house" and "abiding in the house." Only in so far as man has his abode in the Truth of Being can he receive directives from the heart of Being, directives which he may then accept as his law and rule and compared with which all other "laws" are merely poor artifacts.

It is time, Heidegger states at the end of his "epistle" on humanism, that we cease demanding of philosophy the impossible: "Thought is on its descent into the poverty of its nature as a preliminary tool. It gathers language into the simplicity of speech. Speech is the tongue of Being, as the clouds are the clouds of the heavens. Thinking expressed in speech leaves inconspicuous furrows in language. These furrows are even more inconspicuous than those which the tiller of the soil leaves on his slow progress through the fields."<sup>29</sup>

### VIII

Where, it must be asked — if one is to interpret correctly Heidegger's contribution to philosophic thought — does the German philosopher take his stand in the historical dialectic of *essence* versus *existence*? Heidegger himself emphasizes that what he means by "ex-sistence" differs from the traditional Aristotelian and Thomistic concept of *existentia* (i.e., actuality) as distinguished from *essentia* (i.e., inner

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<sup>29</sup> Heidegger, *loc. cit.*, p. 119.

potentiality). "The nature of *Dasein* lies in its ex-sistence," he states.<sup>30</sup> As has been pointed out, ex-sistence means a "standing out" into the Truth of Being. The nature of man is neither determined by the *esse essentiae* nor by the *esse existentiae*, but by the "ex-stasis of *Dasein*."

Existence, as the term is traditionally used, predicates *that* something is. Essence (*Wesen*) predicates *what* something is: it refers to a thing or a being's nature or to the "internal possibility" (*interna possibilitas*) which makes it of necessity what it is. A philosophy whose basic concept is the *essence* of things and beings is an essentialist philosophy. And a philosophy which centers in the *existence* of things and beings is an existentialist philosophy.

The exemplary prototype of all *essentialist* philosophies is the essentialism of Plato. In Platonism, that which is eternal and immutable is not things and beings (*ta onta*), but that by which things and beings are measured, that with which they are to be compared in order to determine whether or not they correspond to their particular essences. Thus there is, for example, an immutable essence of the State which provides the measure and standard for all actual states. There is an essence of Art which makes it possible to measure and judge all individual works of art. And there is also an essence of man, an essence which every human being carries within himself and which permits him to determine whether or not his existence corresponds to the essential human nature. It is man's task to realize this human essence, that is, to translate into existence his "internal possibility": to become existentially what he is essentially.

Philosophy, by advancing from existence to essence, moves from the dimension of time to the dimension of eternity: at the moment it arrives at the world of eternal essences it has transcended the world of changeable and contingent things and beings. Thus, in Platonic essentialism, the reality of the essence precedes the borrowed and inferior reality of existence, since this latter is nothing but the imperfect realization of the enduring, immutable essences.

As Max Müller points out,<sup>31</sup> in Plato's essentialism the relationship between eternity and time, essential and existential reality, constancy and change, remains unexplained. In Platonism, there are two distinct

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<sup>30</sup> Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, p. 42.

<sup>31</sup> Cf. Max Müller, *Existenzphilosophie im geistigen Leben der Gegenwart* (Heidelberg: F. H. Kerle, 1949), *passim*.

worlds: an ahistorical, eternal world of essences or "Ideas," and a less real, defective, and changeable world of existences.

St. Thomas Aquinas calls essence that which determines the place which every existent occupies in the totality of Being. The position of everything in the whole of creation is thus preordained. And every human action receives its norm and direction from this universal and hierarchical order of Being.<sup>32</sup> The moral imperative of Thomistic ethics enjoins every human being to act in such a way that he safeguard for every existent its essential place in the ordered universe and that he aid in restoring this universal order whenever and wherever it has been disturbed or perverted. Man is called upon to realize his own essence by his actions, so that he may conquer, occupy, and maintain his essential place in the created universe, a position which is preassigned to him both by his own essence or nature and by the essences of all other existing beings. There is, furthermore, in Thomistic philosophy a hierarchy or gradation of values, strictly corresponding to the hierarchy of Being: God ranks above man; man's spiritual nature above his material nature; man above brutes; the brutes above plants. Preordained also is the range of human freedom: man can decide freely for or against what is "right," that is, what is in accordance with the hierarchical, universal order of things.

It is Heidegger's contention that in this grandiose Thomistic philosophy of order, the central theme of all philosophy, namely, "Being," is not made the real object of the philosophic inquiry. "Being," he says in effect, is recognized in Thomism as the light that illumines with its sheen everything that is and thus makes philosophy and philosophic questioning possible, but "Being" itself is not subjected to a thoroughgoing philosophic analysis. The investigation, he asserts, rather abruptly leaps from the discussion of the universal order *in* Being to the Creator of this order *above* Being. Does this not mean, however, to continue the thinking in the essentialist categories of Plato and Aristotle rather than to think in specifically *Christian* categories? Christianity, Heidegger argues with Pascal and Kierkegaard, does not demand that I give at all times preference to the higher value in the universal hierarchy of Being: it simply commands that I love my neighbor. And who is my neighbor? Can any universal order answer this question for me? My neighbor is the one who is nearest to me at this moment. He is the

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<sup>32</sup> Cf. the author's *A Realistic Philosophy*, p. 27 ff.

one whom no one helps if I do not help him. He is the one who needs *me*, no one and nothing else.

In short, the Christian category of "the neighbor" is a *historical category*, whereas the schema of essential inner possibilities and of a hierarchy of order and of values is ahistorical. It merely enunciates what is to be done or left undone always or at any time. But the individual Christian may have to sacrifice all his "inner possibilities" for the sake of one specific historical and personal mandate which God imposes upon him in this particular historical situation, at this particular moment. Freedom in the highest sense is therefore the taking upon myself of a task which is uniquely and exclusively *my own*. This is what Heidegger means by an "existential decision" or "choice"; this is for him the authentic mandate of an "existential ethics." And this is also why he designates "historicity" as the fundamental category of existential thinking. Kant's "categorical imperative," which enjoins me to do what every other human being would do if he were placed in my position, is thus the exact opposite of the "existential imperative," which tells me to do what I alone and no one else can do.

It is Heidegger's claim that the modern historical consciousness can no longer remain satisfied with the ahistorical propositions deriving from a static order of essences. He is convinced that the significance of historical change and becoming must find its expression in a new approach to ontology; that philosophy must acknowledge and incorporate in its queries the profound changes that have occurred and are occurring in the essential meaning of religion, morals, politics, economics, art, literature, and in various other provinces of human thinking, doing, and making. By this Heidegger does not mean to suggest that the essences which underlie these phenomena of human history and civilization are without enduring reality but rather that their reality must be approached and interpreted in accordance with the changing historical functions which they fulfill in human life and civilization. The "Truth of Being" calls for different forms of realization and revelation, and such a task, according to Heidegger, can only be accomplished by a new "fundamental ontology."

The German philosopher shows himself equally opposed to Positivism and Idealism: Positivism, he contends, suffered shipwreck because it concentrated its attention exclusively on the finiteness and contingency of matter. Idealism suffered shipwreck because it contemptuously denied the finiteness and contingency of human *Dasein*

and was bent on submerging the individual existence pantheistically in the absolute and infinite spirit. Heidegger's philosophy is laboring with the problem of giving verbal expression to a new experience of both the finite and the infinite.

There is no doubt that Heidegger has a high esteem for Christian theology, although he insists that it refrain from engaging in purely philosophical and metaphysical argumentation. If he disavows a primary interest in the problem of the existence of God, he does so as a philosopher who is more concerned with "Being" than with "existence." In this disavowal he deviates of course from Thomism as well as from traditional Catholic doctrine. The alternative of theism or atheism, he states, does not face the philosopher in his inquiry into the nature of "Being." God, in other words, is not directly and immediately encountered on the philosopher's way from existents to the ground of "Being."

Again, it may be asked, what is "Being"? In Heidegger's terminology, it certainly does not signify the "pure act" (*actus purus*) which for Aristotle and St. Thomas describes the nature of the "Being" of God (the "*Ipsum esse subsistens*"). "Being" for Heidegger is that reality which is encountered in everything that is and which makes possible everything that is. "Being" is the historical evolution of this all-pervading reality toward its actual existence. If "Being" were identical with God, says Heidegger, then this Deity would be a "becoming" or "emerging" God, which is "nonsense." Therefore, "Being" is not to be identified with the *Ipsum esse subsistens* of Thomistic philosophy. Neither is it the *ens commune* (which is merely an *ens rationis*). In scholastic terminology, Heidegger's "Being" is the actuality of the essence (*actus essentiae*), from which the individual essences issue as *modi* of its contingency. Although the transcendent God is not encountered in the realm of strict philosophy, "Being" is His image and similitude (*imago et similitudo Dei*).

## IX

One question of great importance is in the end left at least partially unanswered by Heidegger: the question as to how "Being" is related to "nothingness." Which of the two is the ultimate "ground" of existents? It seems to be Heidegger's conviction that, since what at first appears as "nothingness" is ultimately revealed as "Being," all existents are ultimately grounded in that immense realm of "Being"

which reveals itself behind the veil of nothingness and which restores to man all things and beings, including his own authentic *Dasein*.

"Without Being there can never be any existent," says Heidegger. Being as such, however, is so far above and beyond all the things that are, that "it is without any existents" (*es west ohne das Seiende*). Here, it would seem, the horizon opens toward the divine Being.

"God creates everything out of nothing; and that which He wants to use He first reduces to nothing," wrote Kierkegaard in his *Journals*. For Christianity, too, nothingness is thus in a way "the veil of Being," that is, a transitory phase in the process of man's spiritual self-realization with the aid of divine grace. Thus understood, nothingness is not only the "veil" but, strictly speaking, the opposite pole of Being. Christianity teaches not only that everything that is was created out of nothing but also that everything would sink back into nothingness the moment God were to withdraw His all-sustaining creative power. This is why Nietzsche's or Sartre's "man without God" moves in a meaningless void which he vainly and desperately tries to populate with the stillborn creatures of his own whims and fancies. And since in Christianity, as in no other religion, man's existence is absolutely grounded in God, the atrophy of faith in God must of necessity lead to the most horrible experience of the abyss of annihilation and nothingness. But in this hour of total abandonment there rings out as it were a final appeal to man's freedom: he may definitively choose either the powers of this world, as a sordid substitute for the real ground of his being, or he may regain his selfhood by striking roots again in the Being of the Living God.